



# Canyon Lakes Echoes

Winter/Spring 2003

Page 1

## Main story highlights:

- The Front Range Strategy is part of the National Fire Plan.
- It will implement the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy of the National Fire Plan.
- Potential National Forest treatment needs:  
Arapaho-Roosevelt:  
140,000 acres  
Pike-San Isabel:  
300,000 acres

## Inside this issue:

Dowdy Lake thinning project	2
Good Neighbor agreement	2
Fuels treatment: what does it do for the forest?	2
Projects for 2003	3
Projects in planning	3
Christmas tree sale	3
Wildlife important in forest management	4

## New state strategy seeks to assist landowners, government agencies

The Arapaho-Roosevelt and Pike-San Isabel National Forests have teamed up with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, Rocky Mountain National Park, and state and local agencies to implement the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership. This partnership is part of the National Fire Plan and specifically targeted to the Front Range of Colorado to accelerate fuels reduction projects.

Over the next 10 years, the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership will help local, state and federal agencies set fuel treatment priority areas with the help of the public.

Agencies have created maps identifying high

value areas at risk, such as mountain subdivisions, communities, watersheds and important wildlife habitat. These maps will



The Big Elk Fire makes a run on Kenny Mountain last summer. The Front Range Strategy will help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

be used as tools to help agency managers and the public focus resources for fuel reduction treatments to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

The Canyon Lakes Ranger District is actively engaged in projects with a special emphasis on reducing high hazard fuels. A cooperative project planned for the Crystal Lakes Subdivision will work with landowners to reduce fuels through thinning and limbing trees. The result would lower the potential risk of wildfire to residents, homes, firefighters and land values.

Thinning at Dowdy Lake is another project designed to reduce fuel hazards (*see page 2 for details*).

## Drought has long-term range impacts

The grazing season of 2003 may prove difficult for permittees and rangelands on the Canyon Lakes Ranger District due to the current drought situation.

The district is considering some grazing options with long-term range health in mind. These include shortening the grazing season, reducing animal numbers or eliminating the grazing season altogether.

Decisions to implement one or more of these options will be based on range condition, snow pack and water availability. Assessments of range condition will be made before grazing.

The district recognizes that some permittees may be impacted by this grazing season and will work to address their concerns.

## Dowdy Lake thinning improves habitat for wildlife and reduces fire risk

Under the National Fire Plan and the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, projects like Dowdy Lake continue to thin dense forests to diminish the risk of disastrous wildfire. Thinning is also used to enhance the landscape for wildlife.

Thinning activities at Dowdy Lake are removing many smaller trees eight inches or less in diameter. In some areas, trees up to 12 inches are being taken out to reduce tree stand density.

Remaining trees are limbed to decrease the amount of ladder fuels. Ladder fuels allow fire to climb into the tops of trees, increasing the risk of crown fire during wildfire events. Crown fires jump between treetops in dense forests and may kill entire stands. A tree stand is an area with trees of similar characteristics.

Jolie Pollet, the Wasatch-Uinta National Forests, and Phillip

Omi, Colorado State University, studied several areas of thinned and unthinned stands of trees and compared the results after each had burned. Their research concluded that "fire severity and crown scorch was higher in untreated areas," suggesting mechanical treatments decrease fire intensity.

Trees cut at Dowdy Lake will be used for public firewood. Tree limbs and left-over material has been placed in piles. Most piles will be burned; however, one per acre will be left to benefit wildlife, such as rabbits and other small mammals.

Remaining trees and standing dead trees, called snags, will improve shelter and forage habitat for a variety of wildlife, including bald eagles, flammulated owls, northern goshawks, osprey, elk, deer and other species.



Photos courtesy Cambria Armstrong

Before (above) and after (below) pictures at Dowdy Lake show how thinning can open the forest canopy. This project improved habitat for bald eagles, flammulated owls and other wildlife.



## State and U.S. Forest Service have "Good Neighbor" agreement

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) have created an agreement that will allow the state to implement vegetation projects on National Forest lands.

Using this "Good Neighbor" agreement, the USFS can transfer funds to the CSFS to administer projects that cross over adjacent private and state lands and on to the National Forest.

"We still do all the planning," said Dyce Gayton, district natural resources coordinator, referring to the analysis



required under the National Environmental Policy Act for any actions taken on public lands. But, combining forces will make project implementation more efficient. One agency rather than two will oversee project administration.

"It's exciting because communities, state and federal governments are coming together to work toward a common goal," Lynne Deibel, district wildlife biologist, said.

## Fuels treatments target different forest needs

The U.S. Forest Service uses several treatments to achieve objectives in the National Forest, including clear-cutting, pre-commercial thinning, overstory thinning and group shelterwoods.

Clear-cutting is used to regenerate tree stands. Reasons for using this treatment may be that trees are dying as fast as they are growing or a young stand is infested with mistletoe.

Pre-commercial thinning removes small diameter trees. This treatment is for fire mitigation or stand regeneration. By taking

out smaller trees and ladder fuels, it is less likely that a fire will crown. Stand regeneration leaves healthy trees as a seed source.

Overstory thinning is implemented when taller trees are diseased or infested and the understory is relatively healthy. This treatment will help the smaller trees grow vigorously with less competition.

Group shelterwoods are small clear-cuts used for regeneration. The technique protects smaller trees from the drying effects of wind.

# Current projects focus on forest health

## **Dadd/Bennett Prescribed Fire**

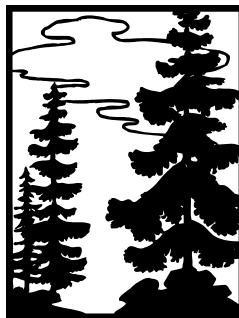
**Project:** This project is currently in the implementation phase with burning occurring when weather and fuel moisture conditions are favorable. Prescribed fire has been used on over 450 acres to reduce fuels and improve wildlife habitat with more treatment scheduled to take place this fall. Total project area is approximately 7,000 acres.

**Pescado Timber Sale:** About 711 acres will be treated with timber harvest and prescribed fire activities to reduce fuels and decrease incidence of dwarf mistletoe.

**Stringtown Project:** This is a forest thinning and prescribed fire project covering about 114 acres designed to reduce high hazard fuels, decrease incidence of disease, provide future old growth conditions and create a fuel break adjacent to private land.

## **Deadhorse Mountain**

**Project:** Timber harvest activities will take place on about 260 acres to improve forest health and create mosaics on the landscape.



**Healthy Forests**

## **Seven Mile Stewardship Project:**

Vegetation management and prescribed fire will be used on about 1205 acres. A stewardship contract is a tool used to achieve National Forest goals while promoting involvement with local communities. We hope to use this type of project in the future to achieve National Fire Plan projects contributing to sustainable sources of income and local employment.

**Cucaracha Timber Sale:** The primary purpose of this project is timber harvest on about 250 acres for forest and ecosystem health objectives.

**Dowdy Lake Project:** This project will reduce excessive fuels and improve forest health by thinning about 270 acres of trees on National Forest land adjacent to private land.

## Project planning for 2003 and beyond

**Cache la Poudre Fire Restoration Project:** The Cache La Poudre project is an opportunity to restore fire as the dominant force of change on the wilderness landscape. Prescribed fire is needed to accomplish this goal. A decision on this project will be available in spring of 2003.

**Sheep Creek 2 Project:** This project proposes a variety of vegetation management treatments including prescribed fire and timber harvesting. These treatments will be used to improve wildlife habitat, provide a mosaic of forest vegetation across

the landscape, and reduce high hazard fuels.

**Housmer Park Project:** An environmental assessment is being prepared to determine whether a non-system trail being used by an outfitter should be included as part of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests trail system. Please contact Kevin Cannon at 970-498-2719 or [kcannon@fs.fed.us](mailto:kcannon@fs.fed.us) for further information.



## Holiday tree sale helps forests stay healthy

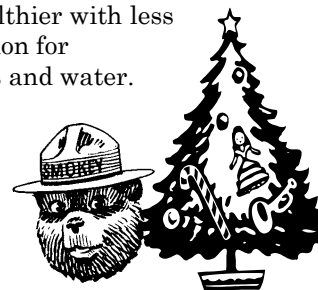
The Christmas tree sale has become an enjoyable tradition for many families, and it helps the Forest Service accomplish some important forest management objectives.

Encouraging people to get out into the National Forest has positive results. Families have fun

finding the perfect tree and visiting with Smokey Bear. The Forest Service gets the opportunity to increase the forest visitors' awareness of the natural world.

The Christmas tree sale also allows the Forest Service to accomplish forest health objectives. After thinning, trees in an area tend

to be healthier with less competition for nutrients and water.



**CANYON LAKES RANGER DISTRICT**

Arapaho Roosevelt National Forests  
1311 South College Ave.  
Fort Collins, CO 80524-4147

Phone: 970-498-1375

Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5



*Caring For the Land and Serving People*

**Find Canyon Lakes Echoes at the Visitor  
Information Center 970-498-1375 or on the web  
at: [www.fs.fed.us/arnf/districts/clrd/vegetation/  
index.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/arnf/districts/clrd/vegetation/index.htm)**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status. (Not all basis apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at 202-720-1127.

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (Voice), or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

## Wildlife important part in forest management

The Dowdy Lake thinning project will improve habitat for wildlife, including the pygmy nuthatch, northern goshawk and warbling vireo.

Aspen is an important forest component for all of these species. At Dowdy Lake, conifers were thinned to encourage aspen growth and regeneration. Aspen stands provide increased nesting and forage opportunities.

The pygmy nuthatch is a cavity-dweller that lives in tree hollows, much like woodpeckers. They depend on large, mature Ponderosa

pine for nesting. Ponderosa pine is one of the tree species being left at the Dowdy Lake project. Brush piles and debris are being created to increase the nuthatch's primary prey base of insects.

Northern goshawks are large, forest-dwelling raptors. Habitat requirements include large tracts of forest with small openings nearby, according to a report written by Lynne Deibel, district wildlife biologist. They typically nest "in conifer forests and apparently do not discriminate among tree species" (Kingery 1998).

They are also known to nest in aspen.

Warbling vireos, small neotropical birds, will also benefit from the thinning at Dowdy Lake. These birds migrate each year between tropical regions in Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. They return to North America to nest and fledge their young. The vireo eats mainly insects and a few fruits and typically nests in bushes or aspen. Brush piles created by the thinning slash will also increase the vireo's prey base.



Pygmy  
Nuthatch (left)

Warbling Vireo  
(right)



Northern  
Goshawk  
(right)

